## Lesson IV

## The Quran and the Orientalists

The Prophet was assumed to have been instructed on Christianity and Judaism either during his travels or while staying in Mecca or Medina. He did travel to Syria twice. when aged thirteen and twenty-five, but this was long before his mission and consequently constitutes no justification for Bodley and others, to describe him as "a man who spent .most of his time on the road"; nor for "his vast travels" to have been described as a major source of his accumulated knowledge. Arab history, according to Sale, records that Muhammad’s first journey to Syria was made at the age of thirteen, with his uncle Abu-Talib. They had a brief meeting with a certain monk called either Sergius or Bohaira. Not only was this encounter too brief but it occurred too early to favour the surmise of the monk's assistance with the revelations, which began about thirty years later.

A further assumption was that Muhammad had a close acquaintance with Christianity while in Mecca through what he might have heard from bishops and monks. Both Bodley and Gibb have referred to bishops who used to preach Christianity from camelback during the fairs held annually at Oqath near Mecca, naming Qiss-ben-Sa'idah as one of them. While it is historically correct that Qiss-ben-Sa'idah and another bishop called Assad-ben-Ka'b did deliver many sermons to the Arabs during these fairs, the unfortunate fact regarding the theory of their influencing the Prophet is that both bishops died over a century before Muhammad's birth.

In addition to the bishops and monks, two Christian swordsmiths were alleged to have taught Muhammad - both by his disbelieving contemporaries and much more recently by Zwemer at the turn of the present century. Jaber and Yasser were Abyssinian slaves who had accepted Islam; their master, a member of the Bani-Hadramy, used to beat them saying, "You are teaching Muhammad!" They would protest, "No, by Allah! He

teaches us and guides us!". It seems that Zwemer favoured their master's opinion.

Meanwhile Menezes, and Gardner, postulated a completely different teacher for the Prophet. They maintained that Salman, a Persian, had helped in writing the sacred Book. This Salman, who had been a Zoroastrian before accepting Christianity in Syria, later moved on to Medina where he met the Prophet and embraced Islam. Salman's life is documented in Islamic history, notably as the very first person to propose digging a trench for the defence of Medina when the city was threatened with invasion by the Meccan disbelievers and their allies. It is well known to Muslims that the greater part of the Qur'an, i.e., about two thirds of it, was revealed in Mecca before the Prophet migrated to Medina, where Salman met him. Furthermore, the Book's literary style is so sublime that even born Arab Iin-guists who have tried over the years to imitate it have not been successful- to say nothing of a Persian.

If you have any questions or require further carification, please, send me an email.

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